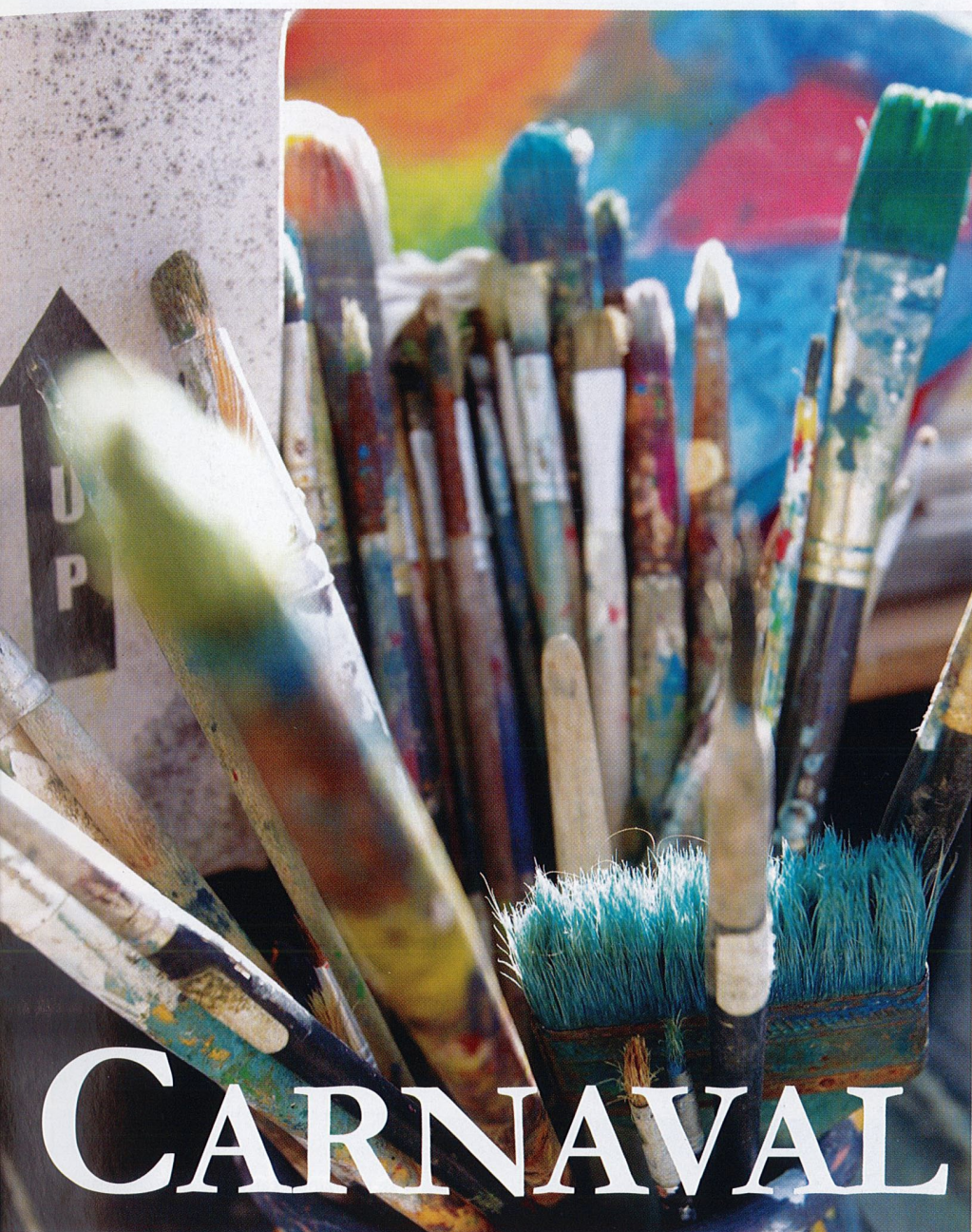
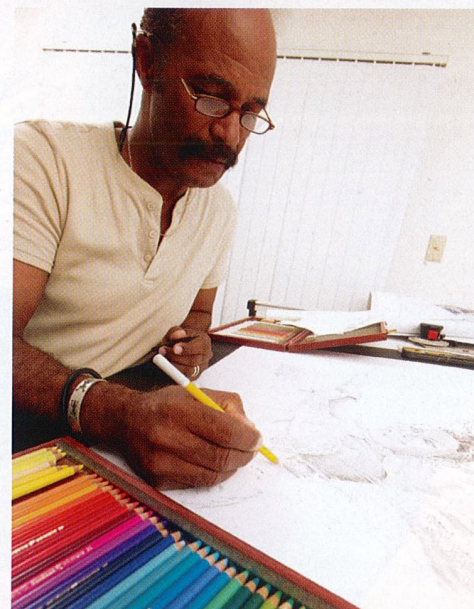




CARNAVAL

IN PENCIL AND PAINT

ARTISTS NIGEL MATTHEW AND ALFONSO DE WINDT CAPTURE THE SPIRIT



Text by Doreen Kralick
Photography by Steve Keith

The spirit of Aruba's Carnaval first found its shape, form, and function in San Nicolas, where immigrants settled when coming to work in what was once the Lago Oil Refinery more than a half a century ago, bringing with them their diverse influences and traditions. The creative legacy of Carnaval is still very much alive, and is perhaps best portrayed in art by those individuals whose pasts run almost parallel to the founding of Carnaval itself in Aruba.

Nigel Matthew and Alfonso de Windt are very different artists, representing separate generations and distinct experiences, but there are points at which their life paths share similar histories. Both their fathers worked in Lago Oil Refinery, with members of their family having immigrated to Aruba from other Caribbean islands. Both men studied in Holland and returned to their native Aruba to work as teachers, but still sought to



explore and create their own art.

Alfonso de Windt

Congenial yet soft-spoken, Alfonso often becomes increasingly animated when talking about his work. "I start with a basic idea and I go where it takes me," he remarks of his Carnival-inspired work in which geometric shapes are married to the human form, emphasizing the recognizable but yet blending together in a rhythmic flow of lines.

In his career as an artist, Alfonso has taken different avenues in his art, almost mimicking trends of Aruban art from the 20th century through to the present. He first dealt in the realism of Aruban landscapes with his later pieces taking a more modern turn with forays into abstracts in oils and political and religious statements expressed in collages and mixed mediums. The narrative continues in his work on Carnival, and while still contemporary in style, it is painting not weighed down by ideology, but solely honed in on the fantasy of Carnival; an exploration in pleasure in both subject as well as creative process.

The exuberance and spectacle of the

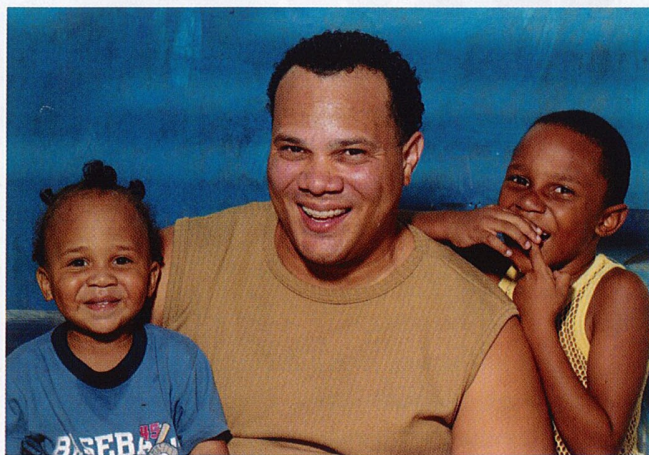
Carnaval is the inspiration, and fittingly, the characters are awash in bright shades of color, with views from below providing them an almost godlike glory. The choice of colors and use of geometric forms could be categorized as almost aggressive, yet these are balanced by the comfort of familiar Carnival

images. Bodies are truncated and a mask stares out unblinking from its center, but each individual work of the triptych shines with glitter, lending to the whole a lighthearted, childlike glee.

"I wanted the piece not to represent just one event but to be timeless, holding everything yet still allowing the viewer to see whatever they want to see."

Alfonso's own perceptions of Carnival were shaped early on, as a child standing along the parade route amongst members of his large family in which he is the tenth of eleven children. Although he confesses he is not a diehard adherent to the annual tradition, he does express appreciation for the visual spectacle, the play of colors and forms, the endless energy of movement against bold tunes.

"Carnaval is never just about people in costumes, it is the atmosphere," he explains. "In my work, I wanted to portray the feeling of it, the impression of movement, the spirit of the parades...Painting it has made Carnival fascinating all over again for me."



Alfonso de Windt's own perceptions of Carnival were shaped early on as a child standing along the parade route. Alfonso's sons, Alfonso, Jr. and Omar, are part of the next generation of Carnival.

Nigel Matthew

Reserved and proper on the surface, Nigel Matthew is, in truth, both highly creative as well as caring, having first been drawn into Carnival as a participant, when he accepted the assignment of designing costumes for his students. In his own works, his skill as a graphic designer is revealed in exacting images that stimulate the viewer's own imagination through depictions of the natural world often juxtaposed with different symbols, shapes, and designs. In finally marrying his talent for drawing with the theme of Carnival, he manages to capture moments in time, with the resulting compositions meticulous in their design and beguiling in their simplicity.

The rich texture of Carnival is presented using its prime players, yet the hectic, kinetic energy normally associated with Carnival is suspended, creating an almost tranquil environment in which to appreciate not simply the person but the persona. The costume of the parade participants, the queen, the prince, the musicians, are not shown in their most flam-

boyant poses but are captured in candid moments. Each of the four panels possesses its own meaning but together they form part of a larger story.

In creating his work, he referred back to his own photos of Carnivals past, pictures that often forgo the long shots and staged close-ups for intimate moments.

"It is how I process Carnival, taking the reality and filtering it through my own imagination, appreciating the angles, forms and patterns, the play of shadows on the street as the participants pass; I take in all the details."

The result is a carefully planned study, which manages to inform yet still convey Nigel's own affection for Aruba's Carnival.

The works have the same power for the viewer. Both artists, whose styles are undeniably different yet still very much within the realm of international trends, portray what is truly Aruban, with a Caribbean emphasis of color and a touch of their own experience of the very cultural territory of Carnival.



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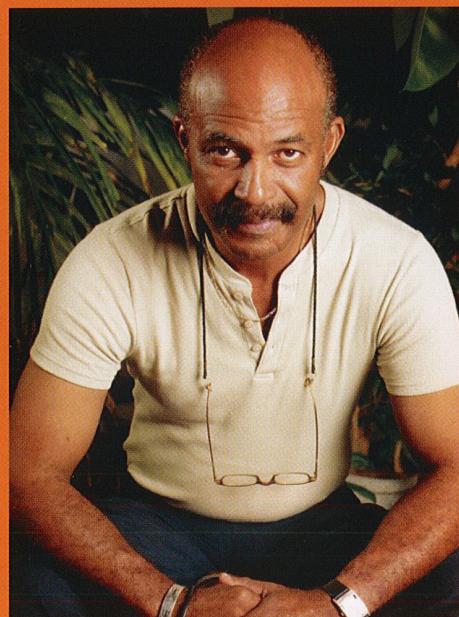


Nigel Matthew marries
his talent for drawing
with the theme of Carnival.

He captures moments
in time with compositions
meticulous in their design
and beguiling
in their simplicity.

His creative process begins
with referencing his
own photos of Carnivals past.

The work begins
with penciled sketches
that are little by little
filled in with colored
pencils and watercolor.



The rich texture of Carnaval is presented using its prime players, yet the hectic, kinetic energy normally associated with Carnaval is suspended, creating an almost tranquil environment in which to appreciate not simply the person but the persona.



Although Carnaval is celebrated in many different countries, Aruba's own brand of the tradition shines with playfulness as well as pride. Both

the work of Nigel Matthew and Alfonso de Windt successfully portray the sense of being in the spirit of Carnaval. 



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